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Book Reviews.

Side Lights upon Bible History. By MRS. SIDNEY BUXTON. New York : Macmillan & Co., 1892. Pp. 293.

Professor Sayce, in the preface to the sixth and last volume of the second series of the *Records of the Past*, that valuable series of books containing the original documents of Assyrian and Egyptian literature in translations, remarked that the public seemed to care more for books about the cuneiform literature than for the literature itself. This is not surprising, since only the few have time and patience to work carefully through the undeniably large amount of chaff to get at the few kernels of wheat. More than that, the interest of the many lies in the information furnished by these ancient writings concerning the Book of books. Their interest is indirect, therefore, and superficial. They are after the light upon the Bible; where there is no light, they pass on. Such books as this by Mrs. Buxton aim to meet the wants of this large class of persons. For those who have neither the time nor the money to make the fuller investigations which are so fascinating and so important to the scholar this book will be found interesting and helpful. It follows along the course of Hebrew history, beginning with the Garden of Eden, down to the Restoration, bringing out the points of connection with the history of other nations, and presenting the material from without which illustrates the Scripture life. Excellent and trustworthy illustrations accompany the text. The writer, a daughter of the eminent scientist, Sir John Lubbock, has had excellent opportunities for collecting and sifting her material, being assisted by Mr. T. G. Pinches, of the British Museum.

Attention must be called to some omissions and defects of the volume. (1) Too much dependence is placed on Professor Sayce's theoretical construction of doubtful points: *e.g.*, the fiction concerning Melchizedek, drawn from the Tel el-Amarna tablets (p. 63); the idea that Queen Tii was daughter of a Mesopotamian king, and that the sun-disc heresy in Egypt was due to the introduction of Semitic religious ideas; the connection of Isaiah, ch. 10, with an imaginary attack of Sargon upon Judah (p. 192); reference to the "Will" of Sennacherib (which is corrected in a note, thanks to Mr. Pinches) (p. 209), etc. (2) M. Renan's favorite ideas respecting the religion of Israel are apparently accepted by the author, especially his notion about Jehovah as the cruel tribal god of Israel (p. 100). Mrs. Buxton seems to have been carried away by the brilliant style of the French scholar to the adoption of notions respecting this and other points which have no foundation in fact. (3) Some positive

errors are, the confusion of the Rameses built by the Hebrew slaves with the city of Rameses in the Delta (p. 85, note); the assignment of the wall across the eastern portion of Egypt to Rameses II., when it had existed long before (p. 90); the acceptance of Professor Paine's wild theories concerning "Seti II., son of Menephtah" (p. 95); the statement that Necho was on his way to help Babylonia and Media conquer Nineveh when he defeated Josiah at Megiddo, and the curious repetition of the fables of Herodotus concerning the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, together with the stranger fact of the omission of all the cuneiform material respecting that event, with the exception of a reference or two to secondary sources whose significance is not grasped—a most serious and extraordinary blunder. Professor Sayce's books should have helped here.

It is natural that a book which deals with so long a period and with so many facts, these changing their character and suffering modification in details from fresh discoveries, should contain some errors and omissions. Mrs. Buxton's book is not free from them, as has been shown. But this fact does not make the book useless, and it should not prevent us from recognizing the general excellence of the material and the new interest in many instances gathering around the biblical narrative in the fresh light which the facts here produced throw upon it.

G. S. G.

Persian Literature, Ancient and Modern. By ELIZABETH A. REED. Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co. Pp. xiv., 419.

The book is a praiseworthy endeavor to inform the popular mind concerning the riches of the Persian literature. Any such attempt to widen the intellectual horizon is commendable. While, as a whole, the impression left upon us is that the literature of Persia hardly repays extensive study, yet, since it contains, in the Avesta, one of the Bibles of the world, as well as poetry like that of Hafiz and Firdusi, no cultivated person should be without some knowledge of it. The writer of this work seems to have had access to good authorities—unfortunately, however, limited entirely to English works—and writes in a pleasing style. The weakest portion of the book is that which discusses the Babylonian cuneiform literature, and attempts to find the origin of much of the Persian mythology and literary material in that literature. The latter attempt is misdirected and results in taking for borrowed material what is the common possession of all the early races. The book would have been much better with the entire omission of this part. A similar remark may be made respecting the chapter on the Koran. It can only be by a very far stretch that it is included in Persian literature. Its place would much more profitably have been occupied by a discussion of the influence of Persian literature upon the life and thought of other nations. Here is large room for valuable work. From the time when the Jews came under the influence of the doctrines of the Avesta down to the present century, there is much to be brought out respecting this exceedingly interesting topic. It is not mentioned in this volume.